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4,075 cancer cases registered in 2000

By Dina Al Wakeel

AMMAN — Jordan's latest National Cancer Registry (NCR) revealed that a total of 4,075 new cases with malignant tumours were reported in the year 2000. These statistics brought the total number of new cancer cases registered between 1996-2000, to 16,540.

Released a couple of weeks ago, the "Incidence of Cancer in Jordan 2000" report analyses rates of cancer among Jordanians and non-Jordanians — non-residents who are referred for treatment in the Kingdom from neighbouring countries.

Of 2000's total number of cases, 3,362 were Jordanians — 49.9 per cent males and 50.1 per cent females.

The standardised incidence rate per 100,000 of the population, stood at 126 for males, and 123 for females, according to the fifth annual report, which aims to provide health professionals, researchers and policy makers with detailed information on cancer to assist putting forth and implementing cancer control strategies.

The standardised incidence rate is the national rate adjusted, using world population standards, for comparison with global statistics.

Compared to neighbouring countries, like Saudi Arabia whose standardised incidence rate is 77 per 100,000 for males and 76 for females, Jordan's rate is high.

However, NCR Director Bassam Hijawi explained that Jordan's national surveillance is perhaps more accurate or more rigorous than many other countries.

Compared to an industrialised country like the US, whose standardised incidence rate per 100,000 is 356 for men and 287 for women, Jordan's rate is less than half.

According to Hijjawi, the data is always two years behind as 18 months have to elapse after the initial diagnosis of each patient, before he/she is added to the registry.

The statistics were collected from the 94 hospitals scattered across the country, the 19 laboratories that offer haematology tests, X-ray clinics and autopsy reports, which covers over 90 per cent of all cases, added Hijjawi.

Statistics also show that this disease mostly afflicts the elderly, as 40.5 per cent of all cases occurred after the age of 60, compared to 8.7 per cent under the age of 20.

Cancer of the breast led with 555 cases, or 16.5 per cent of total cases, followed by colo-rectal cancer 10.3 per cent, leukemia 7.5 per cent, lymphoma 7.2 per cent, lung 6.6 per cent and brain 5.1 per cent.

As for geographical distribution, Amman reported 57.4 per cent of all cases, Zarqa 15.1 per cent, Irbid 13.2 per cent and Balqa 3.9 per cent.

Cancer, the second cause of death in the Kingdom after heart diseases, can be fought by promoting healthy life styles and following healthy diets, said Hijjawi.

“A healthy life style and a healthy diet can prevent one third of all cancers. While early detection can help curing another third of those afflicted,” he explained.